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MAR 16 2020

JAMES N. HATTEN, Clerk  
By: *J. N. Hatten* Deputy Clerk

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

**IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS UNDER  
THE EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES  
CREATED BY COVID-19 AND RELATED  
CORONAVIRUS**

**GENERAL ORDER 20-01**

**ORDER**

This General Order is being issued in response to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) within the Northern District of Georgia and the rapidly evolving threat to health and safety posed by that outbreak. The Court notes the increase in confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the District and the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) conclusion regarding the likelihood of more cases. The Court notes further the January 31, declaration of the Secretary of Health and Human Services of a public health emergency in the United States and the World Health Organization's March 11, 2020 declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic. The President of the United States has declared a national emergency, and on March 14, 2020, the Governor of Georgia declared a public health emergency. As of the date of this Order, there have been over 100 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the State of Georgia, including one death. For many, this disease poses a serious risk of severe illness or even death. Populations identified by the CDC who are particularly vulnerable include many members of the public who form our jury pools, members of our Bar, Court staff, and Judges.

In February of this year, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued “Interim Guidance” recommending that all employers consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19, including the review of guidance from state and local health officials.<sup>1</sup> Significant actions taken to date in response to the threat include the cancellation of essentially all events involving large gatherings of people, the closing of public and private schools, colleges and universities, and the conversion of business and government operations to telework platforms. In recognition of the number of identified and projected cases of COVID-19 in this District, the preventative measures being implemented throughout the District, and the severity of risk posed to the Court, its Bar, and to the public, and given the above public health recommendations from public health authorities, it is hereby ORDERED that, effective Monday, March 16, 2020:

- 1) No jurors will be summoned for civil or criminal jury trials in any division of the Northern District of Georgia for 30 days from the date of this Order. All jury trials, including any trial specific deadlines, are CONTINUED for 30 days pending further Order of the Court;
- 2) In-Court appearances for detention hearings, first appearances, and arraignments, for which alternative means are not possible or agreed to by the defendant, will be coordinated with the duty magistrate judge;

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<sup>1</sup> *Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*, February 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html> (last updated February 26, 2020).

- 3) No grand jurors will be summoned, and all grand jury proceedings in this District are CONTINUED for 30 days pending further Order of the Court;
- 4) With regard to criminal matters, due to the Court's reduced ability to obtain an adequate numbers of jurors and the effect of the above public health recommendations on the availability of counsel and Court staff to be present in the courtroom, the time period of the continuances implemented by this General Order will be excluded under the Speedy Trial Act, as the Court specifically finds that the ends of justice served by ordering the continuances outweigh the best interests of the public and any defendant's right to a speedy trial, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A);
- 5) Individual judges presiding over criminal proceedings may take such actions consistent with this Order as may be lawful and appropriate to ensure the fairness of the proceedings and preserve the rights of the parties;
- 6) Individual judges may continue to hold hearings, conferences, and bench trials in the exercise of their discretion, consistent with this Order;
- 7) This Order does not affect the Court's consideration of civil or criminal motions that can be resolved without oral argument.
- 8) For questions about an individual case, the attorney should contact the chambers of the presiding judge.

The Atlanta, Rome, Gainesville, and Newnan Courthouses will remain open. Staff

in the Clerk's Office will be available by telephone, mail will be received, and intake desks remain open for filing although social distancing measures will be enforced. Electronic filings may still be made through the CM/ECF system. The public is encouraged to continue utilizing Court services while following all applicable public health guidelines.

Dated this 16 day of March 2020.

  
**THOMAS W. THRASH, JR.**  
**CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE**